



*The fire John the Immerser refers to
is a metaphor of
the purifying action of the refiner's fire.*

We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,
acknowledge the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas
and their rich contribution to society.

Warm greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 3rd Sunday of Advent.

1. REFLECTION ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

The **reflection** for this Sunday is offered by Laurie Woods, an Australian biblical scholar.

Today's readings maintain the atmosphere of anticipation about a good thing that is about to happen. There is also a powerful message about leading people to God, about being lights to others.

Zephaniah 3:14-18

Zephaniah lived in an era of political turmoil. Judah had been a vassal state of Assyria in the late 700s, but Assyria's supremacy was on the wane as Babylon emerged as the rising power in the Levant.

Zephaniah's main message is that God decides the fate of nations and will punish the Israelites for their worship of other gods. Other nations that invade and dominate Israel will be overthrown, but the experience will purify Israel forming a smaller but purer people of God.

will be changed to praise and security. But, of course, this must coincide with Israel's return to fidelity. Here is another occurrence of that dominant biblical theme of returning to the Lord. This often gets translated as repentance, but returning to the Lord implies much more. A wholehearted return calls for a radical change of heart and mind back to Goodness

The prophet imagines the Lord as a victorious warrior who in time will become proud of his people and will renew them with immense love. Their return to God will be an occasion of festivity and great rejoicing. What a marvellous message of repaired relationship! Every reconciliation is a time of relief that a relationship has been restored. When a relationship is broken life can be miserable, when a relationship is returned to wholeness, life is great.

Isaiah 12:2-6

Extracts of this reading from Isaiah are read in the Jewish liturgy of Sukkoth, the harvest

Today's extract is a call to rejoicing and Zephaniah sees the Day of the Lord coming in a future where fear will be cast out and shame

festival of booths. The author of the Fourth Gospel parallels this festival and its water symbol with his message about Jesus as the water of life (John 4:10-14, 7:37-38). Spiritual renewal and never-ending refreshment come from the nourishment Jesus has to offer.

Philippians 4:4-7

Paul's letter to the Christians in the northern Greek city of Philippi is really a composite of two or three separate letters. Today's extract was probably part of a letter written from Ephesus in the mid-50s.

The presence of Christ in the life of a believer is a reason for rejoicing

Average readers tend to forget that all Paul's letters are pastoral and contain words of encouragement, advice and sometimes correction. Philippians reveals a close connection between Paul and the community, and some of his most tender sentiments appear in this letter.

Unfortunately, the first sentence of our translation does not accurately convey what Paul wrote. He did not write about happiness. He was encouraging the community to rejoice, not by way of a mere 'cheer up' or a casual greeting, but because he was convinced that the presence of Christ in the life of a believer was a reason for rejoicing. Happiness, on the other hand, is not something we can manufacture or produce. The circumstances of life, with their array of ups and downs, do not always guarantee happiness. Like peace, happiness is a by-product of the way we live, giving serious attention to Christian values and priorities. We cannot go out and get happiness or peace. Our lifestyle will guarantee them – or not.

Paul encourages the community to practise *epieikeia* (ἐπιεικεία), which takes in the idea of gentleness, courtesy, graciousness. The exercise of this godly virtue will demonstrate the values

that Christians are committed to. In a practical concern for mental health Paul insists that there is no reason for anxiety and, like Jesus, urges the community to avoid the kind of needless worry that achieves nothing.

Paul's pragmatic nature prompts him to recommend the prayer of gratitude. He is aware that no negative thought or emotion can ever emerge from a disposition of gratitude.

Luke 3:10-18

This reading immediately reveals for us the significance of John the Immerser. His contemporaries saw him as a prophetic figure, who contrasted with many of the religious leaders of his day in that he practised what he preached. Luke gives us a glimpse of people of all stamps who came to John seeking a better way to live, a more wholesome lifestyle that might bring contentment and fulfilment.

John announced Jesus as the agent of a new kind of consciousness

Deflecting attention from himself John directed his disciples and listeners to the messiah, God's anointed one who would be the agent of the Holy Spirit bringing his followers into the light. John was effectively saying that Jesus, the anointed one, would introduce people to a new kind of consciousness, a more penetrating awareness of how important it is to nurture the inner self and grow to wholeness.

Most English translations have John saying, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming...he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.' The problem with this is that we tend to think in terms of sacramental baptism and the forgiveness of sin. But this is neither sacramental baptism nor an absolution process. In John's mind it was a ritual washing that symbolised a person had already acknowledged sin, abandoned a negative lifestyle and was

determined to change course to a life of goodness.

In the language of spiritual metaphor John was saying that he immersed people in water but the one to come would wash them over with the Holy Spirit. In other words, they would walk in the atmosphere of the Spirit, like walking in a wind (= spirit) where every step, every thought and action would be governed by the all-encompassing values of the Spirit.

The fire John refers to is a metaphor of the purifying action of the refiner's fire. The sinner turning back to God is purified and upgraded by the fire of change and restructuring, and enters honed and polished into the realm of the Spirit.

John had no time for formal religion that had lost heart

It is easy to gloss over the depth of meaning contained in John's words and his whole mission. The metanoia he is advocating involves a radical change of attitude and behaviour. His preaching had unmistakable power and influence and was forcing people to face up to hard realities and measure their way of living

against the spirit of Torah. Deriving satisfaction from going through the religious motions and focusing on externals was cheap as chips in John's book. He had no time for formal religion that had lost heart. He was intent on encouraging people to live out the core values of the Mosaic tradition that prized the kind of attitudes and behaviour that enhanced relationships with God, fellow humans and all creation. What we don't have, unfortunately, is a record of the number of people John brought to God. But we can be sure it was pretty impressive.

In his description of John and his mission, Luke is sending a message to his baptised community to remind them that they have made the radical change to a life of goodness, and we see him urging them to remain constant in their commitment to Jesus Christ. He is also pointing out that John was persistent in repeatedly encouraging his contemporaries to turn their lives around. Commitment to Christ is not a one-off event. It requires constancy, persistence and renewal. Luke is saying we have to do our bit to correspond with Christ as the ever-flowing water of life that refreshes, or else risk becoming stagnant in our spiritual growth.

* * *

Success depends on staying power. The reason for failure in most cases is lack of perseverance.

James R Miller (American Presbyterian pastor and author)

Perseverance is the ability to follow through on an idea long after the mood has passed.

Anonymous

* * *

A husband died and left his wife \$20,000. After the funeral, his wife was talking to her closest friend and said she was totally broke.

'What do you mean you're broke? Said the friend, 'I thought you said he left you \$20,000.'

'Yes,' replied the wife, 'But after \$5,000 for the funeral and \$15,000 for the memorial stone I have nothing left.'

'The friend said, 'Wow! That must have been some kind of stone. How big was it?'

The wife held up her finger and pointed to the ring and said, 'Three and a half carats.'



Advance Notice: Christmas Mass, Boonah parish

Christmas Eve Mass: 7pm Harrisville church

Midnight Mass: Boonah church

Christmas Day Mass: 8am Boonah church

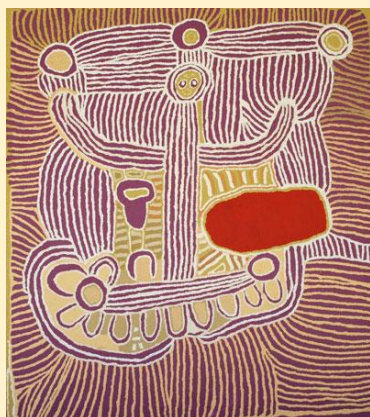
2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,
 from laws to ideals,
 from threats to persuasion,
 from coercion to conscience,
 from monologue to conversation,
 from ruling to serving,
 from withdrawn to integrated,
 from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
 from exclusion to inclusion,
 from hostility to friendship,
 from static to changing,
 from passive acceptance to active engagement,
 from prescriptive to principled,
 from defined to open-ended,
 from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,
 from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
 from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



Desert Eucharist
Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Saturday

5.00pm

Boonah church

Sunday

7.30am

1st and 3rd Sunday: Harrisville church

2nd and 4th Sunday: Peak Crossing church

9.30am

Boonah church

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, the 3rd Week of Advent:

Tuesday 14th December 5.30pm, **Boonah church**

Wednesday 15th December 6.00pm, **Peak Crossing church** *followed by dinner at The Peak Pub*

Thursday 16th December 8.00am, **Boonah church**

Friday 17th December 9.15am, **Boonah church**

▪ *We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond:* all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Bernice Lippiatt, Trish Merlehan, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Neil O'Connor, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill Archer, Louisa, David Mitchell, Vince Bellett, Bill (USA) and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.



▪ **EVERY SUNDAY** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches.

We are invited to bring a gift of **non-perishable food or goods** for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul.

The local Vinnies conference very much appreciates our weekly support.

▪ **THANK YOU** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way, please see me.

▪ **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** The 1st Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).

▪ Throughout the main street of Boonah, High Street, the trees are decorated in festive colours.

Ironically the trees were 'dressed' on the 1st Sunday of Advent!

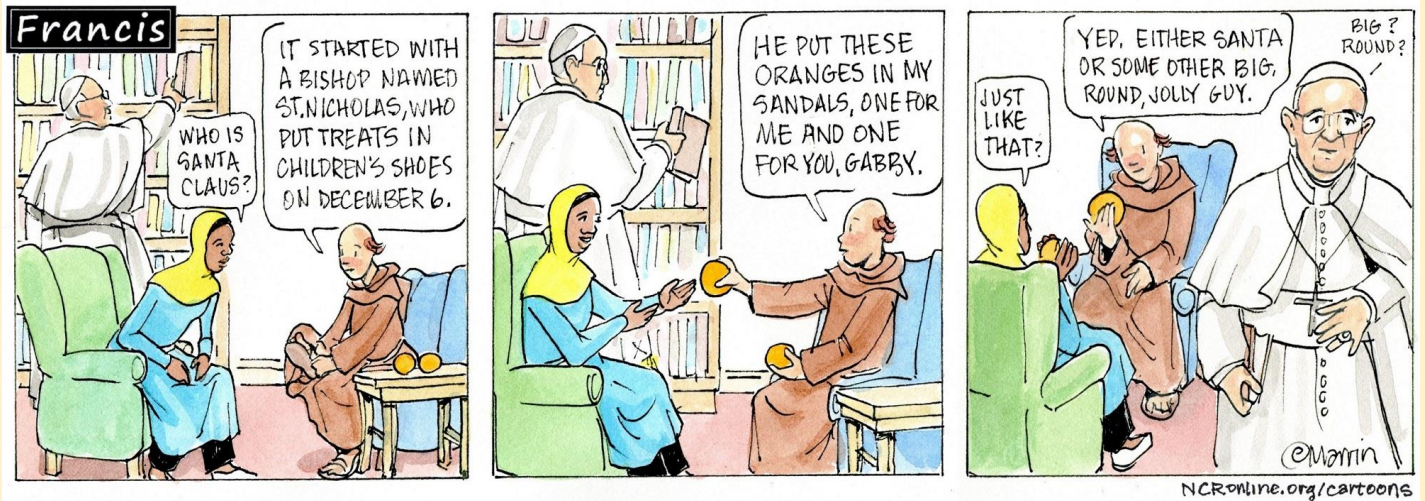


Advent's themes of happiness and hope can annoy someone who hurts. When you are burdened with the chaff of ego or the weight of anxieties, forced joy and canned glee disgust the best of persons.

Yet it is nothing but our diminishment, our losses, our sadness, our weight of sin that Advent confronts and calls us out of. Somehow it is the pathos of our own melancholy that must be laughed away. It is our sense of exile, our cramped confinement, the dross of our psychic baggage that must be burned off by the fire of love.

John Kavanaugh, SJ





7th December 2021

3. Jesuit Social Services recently released *Dropping off the Edge 2021: Persistent and multilayered disadvantage in Australia*. This is the fifth report in a series that began in 1999, the products of a long-term collaboration between the late, great Professor Tony Vinson AM and Jesuit Social Services. Ross Homel AO is Emeritus Professor, Criminology & Criminal Justice at Griffith University and recently delivered the 2021 *Tony Fitzgerald Lecture* in Brisbane. He has written the following perspective: "How community interventions can prevent youth crime"



compounding nature of the disadvantageous structural factors that generate it have profound intergenerational consequences, including chronic criminal offending by children as young as 10 years old.

The geographical distribution of deprivation in my home state of Queensland is broadly similar to patterns in other states and territories. A small minority of localities, mostly situated outside Greater Brisbane, suffer from disproportionately high rates of a wide array of problems including low income, overcrowding, long-term unemployment, particulate matter in the air, no internet, child maltreatment, and youth crime. These different strands of disadvantage pile-up and interlock, countering attempts to break free.

The web-like structure of disadvantage comes into sharp focus when one examines the most disadvantaged 3 per cent of Queensland locations. In these 15 places family violence, prison admissions, and juvenile convictions occur at shockingly high rates, both reflecting and reinforcing high rates of poverty.

I recently delivered the 2021 *Tony Fitzgerald Lecture* in Brisbane in which I focused on the early prevention of chronic youth offending. As a 'pathological optimist' I argued that the combination of prevention science and community empowerment through the co-creation of community controlled, data-guided, and evidence-based solutions tailored to the needs of local children and families can be one of the circuit-breakers that is needed by the most severely disadvantaged communities.

I also argued that this community-oriented public health approach to the seemingly intractable problem of youth crime can be a circuit breaker that policy makers need to break free from the 'get tough' punishment-oriented public discourse that disproportionately criminalises and incarcerates socially disadvantaged and First Nations children.

'The program was sustained for 10 years and had many positive outcomes, including at age 25 a 31 per cent reduction in violent crime and a 35 per cent reduction in crimes involving illegal drugs.'

Being optimistic does not mean being unrealistic about the formidable challenges entailed in this radical early prevention agenda. The poverty and violence of the home and community environments from which most serious, repeat youth offenders come reflect the impacts of colonisation, the stolen generations, and racist police practices, to mention just a few of the most salient historic factors, and these malign legacies cannot be easily overcome. But as the Uluru Statement From the Heart asserts, 'When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish.'

Respectful partnerships between communities, researchers, service providers, and governments can be the seedbed for the new ideas and the sharing of data and evidence that can turn high ideals into concrete realities that foster positive human development and reduce the flow of damaged children into youth detention.

And damaged these children are. A pioneering study of children in youth detention in Western Australia found that 89 per cent had at least one domain of severe neurodevelopmental impairment, and 36 per cent were diagnosed with FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) – the highest incidence for an incarcerated population anywhere in the world.

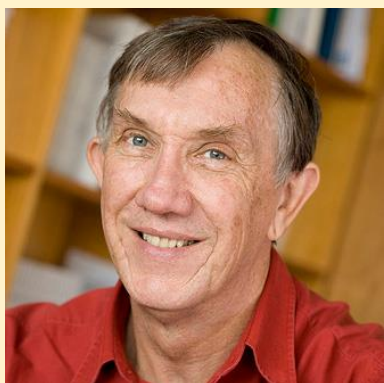
The very wide range of serious developmental impairments identified in this study contribute to problems at school and with employment, mental health, social exclusion, substance misuse and early and repeated engagement with police. We can be almost certain that the great majority of young people involved in serious, persistent criminal offending suffer from various forms of developmental impairments including longstanding and untreated conduct problems arising from FASD or other causes.

The good news is that we now have persuasive evidence that serious conduct problems can be addressed very effectively through sustained and holistic partnerships involving scientists, schools, families, and community members. The Fast Track Program in the United States was a 10-year multilevel preventive intervention designed by the Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, a collaboration of some of the best prevention scientists in the world.

The program operated in four widely geographically separated communities in the United States throughout the 1990s. Working with children from age 5, it integrated a social-emotional learning program for all students (PATHS: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) with a set of indicated or targeted interventions for children showing high rates of aggression at school entry. Project components included social-behavioural support, reading interventions, parenting classes, and home visiting to support healthy family development.

The program was sustained for 10 years and had many positive outcomes, including at age 25 a 31 per cent reduction in violent crime and a 35 per cent reduction in crimes involving illegal drugs. These effects were most marked for the highest risk children, approximately 10 per cent of the intervention sample.

In Australia we have the wealth and the expertise to adapt this and other pioneering studies to our own community contexts, working within the rapidly developing framework of co-creation and community control. But do we have the political will? That will probably depend on the successful implementation of several demonstration projects funded by philanthropy, research councils, and government as a foundation for sustained community advocacy.



It will be through preventative initiatives such as these that we have the best chance of breaking out of the policy prison of blame and incarceration. As Tony Vinson said when launching the first Dropping off the Edge report in 2007:

It is time to get serious about drawing the most severely disadvantaged neighbourhoods of our society into the mainstream economic and social prosperity characteristic of present-day Australia.



9th December 2021

4. Bishop Ken Howell wrote to all parishes on Friday with an update re Covid-19 and changes to occupancy of churches requirements for Christmas Mass. I share it with us all.

Dear Fathers,

I'm writing to provide some important updates on a new Queensland Government directive that will affect arrangements for Mass and other liturgies over the Christmas period, and beyond. The directive comes into effect from **17th December 2021**.

The new directive (*Public Health and Social Measures linked to vaccination status*) outlines the following **occupancy limits** for places of worship:

Whichever is greater:

- 1 person per 2 square metres indoors

OR

- 100 % of seated venue capacity with ticketed and allocated seating up to a maximum of 200 people;

These limits apply to Mass, baptisms and other liturgies. There is no occupant density limit for outdoor Masses.

In addition to these occupancy limits, places of worship must continue to ensure attendees are registered via the Check-in Qld app and operate in accordance with the COVID Safe Checklist.

There are some different arrangements in place for funerals and weddings.

- Funerals conducted indoors may accommodate 100 % of seated venue capacity with ticketed and allocated seating up to a maximum of 500 people (even if this exceeds 1 person per 2 square metres). Funerals in an outdoor space do not have an occupant density and but must comply with other requirements of this public health direction.

- There will be no occupancy limit for weddings, provided only fully vaccinated people attend. If anyone attending a wedding is unvaccinated, occupancy will be restricted to a maximum of 20 people. All weddings must comply with other requirements of the public health directive.

I assure you that a number of people from our offices have sought clarification on these directives from the Government. There is no doubt that this will necessitate possible changes in planning for Christmas Masses that will add a level of organisational difficulties at this late hour. Further information including a revised COVID Safe checklist and communication resources will be distributed next week.

Thank you in advance for your work to ensure we comply with this directive across the Archdiocese and your ongoing commitment to keeping yourselves and all in our parish communities safe.

5. This Sunday's edition of THE TABLET advertised a guided reflection on each of the O antiphons. It is titled: **The 'O' Antiphons: Seven Stanzas in the Poem of Advent:**

As our Advent journey draws us closer to the light and joy of Christmas, take the opportunity to join with The Tablet as Dame Laurentia Johns OSB, a member of the Stanbrook Community, leads us on a guided reflection on each of the O antiphons.



It is a paid event and perhaps a little early for some – 5am Friday 17th December. However, the presenter has well-known reputation in Benedictine circles and beyond.

Dame Laurentia Johns OSB has been a Benedictine nun of Stanbrook Abbey for over 30 years. An experienced communicator on the Rule of St Benedict, she has been involved in sharing the riches of the Christian monastic tradition with seekers of all kinds including newcomers to the monastery, guests and oblates. Sr Laurentia's ministry has extended beyond the abbey via a variety of publications, talks, articles, workshops, broadcasts and digital reflections. Her latest book, Seeking Byland: Poems through the Seasons from Stanbrook Abbey was published by Gracewing in 2020.

For more information about this event [click here](#).

6. The 2021 Luzbetak Lecture sponsored by CTU, Chicago, was recently given by Rev. Dr. Peter Phan. It addresses themes of mission and culture. The 22nd annual lecture is titled: "Pope Francis's Ecological Theology in Dialogue with Asian Religions."

This annual lecture is very enjoyable. [Click here](#) to access it.



STOPline

STOPline receives information about abuse, harm and other serious misconduct by Archdiocesan workers (including priests, religious, employees and volunteers).

Information can be provided anonymously.

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 Email: AOB@stopline.com.au
 Online Report: www.bnecatholic.stoplinereport.com

STOPLINE

If you think it's wrong report it.



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